

STORING FUEL

By Rev. J.D. Hooker

A few years ago many folks made mistakes while making preparations for the big Y2K non-event. Some of these mistakes could have turned into major problems if a crisis had hit. I know folks who stockpiled gasoline, but because they hadn't stored it properly, six months or a year later they found themselves with nothing but "junk fuel" that fouled plugs and clogged carburetors and fuel injectors. This is a good time to take another look at these issues, and maybe learn a little from earlier mistakes.

Since most cars and pickups, as well as tractors, mowers, chainsaws, rototillers, and other equipment, are gasoline powered, keeping a supply of this fuel on hand is a wise decision. But you can't just dump gasoline into 55-gallon drums and expect it to keep for long periods of time.

For our own gasoline storage needs, we used to use metal 55-gallon drums because they are so easily grounded for extra safety. Now, because of problems with rust contaminating our fuel so badly at times, we use heavy plastic drums placed in simply fashioned wooden storage racks. For safety's sake, whatever sort of storage containers you select should be placed a fair distance away from your dwelling.

Much of the gasoline now sold is oxygenated. This type of gasoline does not store as well as non-oxygenated, so try to find gasoline without MTBE or ETBE additives.

Years back I learned that like kerosene, diesel fuel, and even heating oil, gasoline left straight as it comes from the pump simply won't stay good for more than a few months. But there are readily available, reasonably inexpensive addi-

tives that can greatly prolong the stability and usability of stored fuel. The first and most important of these is a fuel stabilizer. I like a product called *Sta-Bil*. Simply follow the guidelines on the label. If your stored fuel hasn't been used up in about a year you'll need to mix in another dose. We'll also routinely add "*HEET*" or some other water absorbing additive to every container of fuel that's set aside for storage.

Also, except for one fairly new chainsaw, virtually everything we own that's gas powered has grown to be pretty old now. Therefore we'll also add in one of the liquid "pour-in-type" lead replacers to each drum of gasoline. With newer engines this isn't needed. Should you find yourself needing to run both newer and older stuff, you'll need to be sure to select one of the lead-replacing additives that plainly states on the label that it's safe for catalytic converters.

Once we're ready to pour some of the stored gasoline into one of our pick-ups or other piece of equipment, we'll add *Gumout* or some other carburetor and fuel injector cleaner to the tank first. Plus, if the gasoline's been stored for more than six months some octane booster needs to be added as well. Once again, it's best just to follow the label directions when adding these. Two-cycle fuel (for chain saws, etc.) is simply mixed in one-gallon cans as needed.

Should you find it necessary to store more than one type of liquid fuel, I'd recommend you use some sort of unmistakable marking or color coding system. We use white drums for gasoline, blue ones for kerosene, and black for diesel. But any such scheme you prefer would work just as well, as long as you stick with it.

It also pays to keep in mind that, even after adding fuel stabilizer,

kerosene will usually produce an off odor when burned after several months of storage. So it's always wise to keep some kerosene deodorizer on hand for the times when you'll need to light up your heater or a few lanterns.

Propane (or LPG) is something of a different story. Whether kept in a relatively large bulk type tank like ours or in those portable gas grill type cylinders, this fuel never seems to go bad. In fact, the only real problems that I've seen regarding tanks of propane have been ruptured tanks (much more dangerous than most real bombs) usually caused through careless hauling, along with fittings that simply don't fit. I'm sure most of *BHM*'s readers already understand the importance of securely fastening or lashing propane cylinders before transporting them.

At the same time, all sorts of adapters for use with varying propane tank systems are cheap and readily available right now. You might want to try your local RV dealer or a plumbing shop.

I don't think I need to remind any *BHM* readers not to smoke around any of your stored fuel, but I've seen folks forget that things like kerosene lanterns, propane lanterns, and electrical tools (which **do** make sparks during use), are just as dangerous as lighted matches around gasoline, propane, and other fuels.

Also remember that any engine you intend on operating with your stockpiled fuel needs motor oil. Most farm supply stores, auto parts stores, and other retailers sell bulk oil in containers holding anywhere from one to 55 gallons at some pretty reasonable prices. With motor oil being much more stable in storage than just about any fuel, this can simply be kept as is in the original containers. This also applies to things like antifreeze, transmission fluid, brake fluid, tubes of grease, etc. Δ